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UNCLAS HELSINKI 000810

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREF PREL FI IDP

SUBJECT: FINLAND: LIKELY TO ACCEPT UZBEK ASYLUM SEEKERS

REF: A. SECSTATE 120958

B. SECSTATE 131485

(U) Poloff delivered points in reftels to Finnish officials in the MFA's Refugee Affairs Office. The Finns were aware of the situation and said that it was likely Finland would accept a limited number of the Uzbek asylum seekers, perhaps 10-15. According to Finnish officials, the country had only a small remaining number of "discretionary" spaces in its quota system for asylum seekers/refugees, and was already processing several other cases as well. Moreover, a certain number of spaces were probably going to be reserved for possible "Mari" refugees (NOTE: The 'Mari' are a small Finno-Ugric ethnic group in Russia who have recently made headlines in Finland alleging discrimination by Russians against them). The Finnish MFA said that it was already working with the UNHCR on logistics regarding the Uzbeks.

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